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STUDENT IDENTIFICATION WITH COLUMBUS COLLEGE--A PILOT STUDY.

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A SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED 21-ITEM SENTENCE COMPLETION INSTRUMENT WAS ADMINISTERED TO 20 STUDENTS IN A "FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION" COURSE AT COLUMBUS COLLEGE, GEORGIA, AS A PILOT ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN A MEASURE OF STUDENT IDENTIFICATION WITH THE COLLEGE. SCORING CONSISTED OF RATING EACH COMPLETION AS A POSITIVE, NEUTRAL, OR NEGATIVE ATTITUDINAL EXPRESSION. RESPONSES INDICATED A POSITIVE CONSENSUS TOWARD ACADEMIC ASPECTS OF THE COLLEGE, TEACHING ABILITY OF THE FACULTY, AND STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPRESSION BY MEANS OF THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION. STUDENTS APPEARED TO REGARD THEIR PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS HAMPERED BY LIMITED STUDENT ACTIVITIES, HELP IN MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE, AND DEVELOPMENT OF NEEDED SOCIAL COMPETENCIES. (AUTHOR/WO)

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STUDENT IDENTIFICATION WITH COLUMBUS COLLEGE: A PILOT STUDY

by

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Summary: A specially constructed 21-item sentence completion instrument was administered to 20 students in a Foundation of Education course as a pilot attempt to obtain a measure of student identification with Columbus College. Scoring consisted of rating each completion as a positive, neutral, or negative attitudinal expression. Results tentatively formed polar clusters suggesting positive attitudes toward academics and some socializing among students while negative attitudes seem extant for the meaning of higher education, the degree of personal contacts with students, transition to college life, and the desired development of identifications for social competencies.

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The purpose of this pilot study was (1) to determine the articulative ability of a constructed sentence completion test, and (2) to gather data relevant on the degree of student manifestation of identification with Columbus College and with other students. Specifically, what students think about an institution and the extent of perceived affiliation they have with other students was considered best obtained through the medium of a projective device.

The impetus for this pilot study grew out of a general concern displayed by the administration over failures to predict Fall Quarter enrollment. Too, various members of the administration and Division Heads had raised several possible reasons for current enrollment rates; these observations were particularly considered and an attempt was made to imbed these into the pilot device.

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Instrument

Twenty-one items comprised the scale (see Appendix A). Each item is an incomplete sentence and requires completion by the respondent. Since each item is somewhat

lacking in structure, the respondent must apply his own resources based on personal experiences and beliefs, and which are both idiomatic and idiosyncratic expressions. These items were listed in the booklet in a quasi-progression of experiences since college entrance. Areas examined by each item are listed below:

Item No.	Area
1.	Strength of relationship with high school ties
2.	Depth of commitment for college
3.	Financial problems and social class distinctions
4.	Perception of transition to college
5.	Extent of social affiliation and/or interests
6.	Perception of public expectations of college students
7.	Range of student interests
8.	Role of student government association
9.	Role of sports
10.	Student-student rapport
11.	College atmosphere
12.	Social affiliation
13.	School activities
14.	College teaching
15.	Grades
16.	Definition of school spirit
17.	Things a college could offer the student
18.	The faculty at Columbus College
19.	Additional student activities
20.	Existing college spirit
21.	Normal student identifications

Subjects

Subjects cooperating in this pilot study were 20 members in an evening class of a Foundations in Education course. A number of these are part-time students who have only limited or no contact with the majority of day students and many of whom hold full-time jobs. Nearly three-fourths of the subjects plan to pursue a major in education.

Procedure

The sentence completion device was introduced to the class of 20 students as an effort to learn what and how Columbus College students regard themselves in relation to the institution. It was explained that the responses would remain anonymous since

no student was asked to identify himself nor was any booklet pre-coded. Students were cautioned to work diligently and to note that there were no right or wrong answers. Upon completion of the task, each student was asked to write on the cover sheet (which was blank to emphasize anonymity) a brief statement on what they believed was the general intent of the instrument.

Since the class demonstrated a high degree of animation to the instrument, several requests for sharing responses, taken at random, were fulfilled. During the regular short recess, students sought from each other an indication of how each responded to particular items of the booklet. Obviously, the instrument served to unite the students in small-group forums sharing with each other concepts and perceptions about Columbus College.

Scoring Procedure

Several possibilities exist for scoring a sentence completion device. Of these possibilities -- collection of modal response, rating of response by judges, rating each item in terms of positive-neutral-negative attitudes, etc. -- positive-neutral-negative rating seemed most expedient for purposes of this study. Lack of response was treated as neutral. An item over all subjects scoring procedure was decided upon as the most feasible and the one which would render reliable ratings.

Analysis

Scoring of the responses to the Sentence Completion Test consisted of (a) reading each item through over all students and judging each, individually, as plus, minus, or neutral, depending upon the scalar qualities of the expression in accordance with a polar scale, (b) summing all judgments after weighting each set of frequencies from minus, neutral and plus respectively, 1, 2, and 3, (c) rank-ordered the summed scores from positive to least positive with the rank of 1 equivalent to the most positive

expression, and so forth, and (d) taking extreme-most rank-ordered items to form clusters of positive and negative expressions. Table 1 contains the basic measurement data.

The obtained clusters found include the following sets of items:

Positive: College teaching
Role of Student Government Association
Definition of school spirit
Faculty members at Columbus College

Negative: Role of sports
Student activities
Perception of transition to college
School activities
Extent of social affiliation and/or interests

The above clusters of extreme attitudinal responses suggest the following probable explanation: there is a positive consensus concerning the fundamental academic aspects of the college expressed in terms of the teaching ability of the faculty, and an outlet for student expression via the Student Government Association. Too, these students associate school spirit with wholesome and desirable expressions on a college campus.

However, the student seems to regard his pursuit of higher education as being handicapped by limited (1) student activities, (2) college help for the student in making the transition from high school to college, and (3) development in needed identifications to achieve social competencies.

In addition, it was noted that some skew obtained, thereby allowing for more negative expressions than positive ones. Could this represent student cynicism and/or pessimism?

Table 1. Summary of Ratings and Rank Order

Item No.	Number of Ratings Judged: Positive Wt. = 3	Neutral Wt. = 2	Negative Wt. = 1	Total Score	Rank Order	Extreme Attitudinal Values
1.	12	1	7	45	8	
2.	10	7	3	47	5.5	
3.	7	5	8	39	13.5	
4.	4	1	15	29	20	-
5.	7	3	10	37	16	-
6.	10	6	4	46	7	
7.	10	7	3	47	5.5	
8.	13	5	2	51	2	+
9.	17	2	1	26	21	-
10.	10	3	7	43	9.5	
11.	7	5	8	39	13.5	
12.	8	4	8	40	11.5	
13.	3	7	10	33	19	-
14.	15	5	0	55	1	+
15.	5	8	7	38	15	
16.	11	7	2	49	3	+
17.	5	4	11	34	17.5	-
18.	10	8	2	48	4	+
19.	2	10	8	34	17.5	-
20.	7	6	7	40	11.5	
21.	7	9	4	43	9.5	

Attitudinal Poles

Positive

College Teaching
Student Government Association
Definition of school spirit
Columbus College faculty

Negative

Role of sports
Transition to college
School functions
Student activities
Social affiliation and/or interests

APPENDIX A

/Note: The test booklet contained one blank sheet as cover and two pages of test items. Each item was triple-spaced to allow relative freedom for writing expressions in full./

Booklet

COMPLETE EACH SENTENCE

1. The longer one is removed from their high school acquaintances,
2. Once having decided to attend college, a student should
3. College expenses are
4. College freshmen are usually
5. Socially-minded students at Columbus College are normally
6. People expect students at Columbus College to
7. Aside from the academic aspects at Columbus College, students generally
8. The student government association of Columbus College is instrumental in
9. Sports at Columbus College should
10. Communication among students is usually
11. The college atmosphere at Columbus College is best described as
12. Sororities and fraternities at Columbus College would
13. School functions should
14. The best kind of teaching is found
15. Grades, in general, mean
16. School spirit is defined as
17. Most colleges should offer the student more
18. Faculty members at Columbus College are generally
19. Student activities should include
20. College spirit at Columbus College is
21. College students usually identify closest to